FWP Director's Charge to the Fish and Wildlife Licensing and Funding Citizen Advisory Council July 11, 2013

WHEREAS, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks relies on the sale of hunting and fishing licenses to fund fish and wildlife management and hunting and fishing access; and

WHEREAS, for the past half-Century the Legislature has chosen to fund fish and wildlife management through a cycle of authorizing sufficient increases in the price of fishing and hunting licenses about once per decade; and

WHEREAS, this approach intentionally creates a structurally imbalanced funding system whereby Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks accumulates large fund balances for the first half of the decade after a fee increase, a balanced budget for a single year and deficit spending for the remainder of the decade; and

WHEREAS, the last general price increase for resident hunting and fishing licenses was in 2005; and

WHEREAS, fish and wildlife management funding is currently in the deficit spending portion of the 10 year funding cycle, and in 2012 FWP spent \$3.7 million more in license funding than it received in revenue from hunting and fishing license sales, and

WHEREAS, Montana law establishes at least 30 different types of hunting or fishing licenses that are either given away for free or sold at a discounted price; and

WHEREAS, the face value of the lost potential revenue from free and discounted price licenses is \$4.9M annually; and

WHEREAS, of the \$45.3 million of hunting and fishing license revenue generated in 2012, \$14.6 million came from resident license sales and \$30.7 million came from nonresident license sales; and

WHEREAS, - nearly one-third of FWP's license revenue is statutorily earmarked for a specific purpose and unavailable for general agency operations; and

WHEREAS, Montana has nearly 100 different types of resident and nonresident hunting and fishing licenses; and

WHEREAS, hunters and anglers traditionally have been solely responsible for funding fish and wildlife management in Montana, and

WHEREAS, nationally the average age of hunters is increasing and the number of hunters has declined. Based upon hunter demographics in Montana, FWP projections suggest that over the next 10 years the number of resident and non-resident hunters who purchase at least one deer or elk license could drop from 190,000 in 2012 to between 165,000 and 171,000 individuals by 2021.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Director of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks establishes the Fish and Wildlife Management Licensing and Funding Advisory Council.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the advisory council is to evaluate Montana's system of funding fish and wildlife management through the sale of fishing and hunting licenses and to develop options and recommendations to the Director of the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. The Director will then consider the advisory council's recommendations and public comment on them in developing the department's proposals to the 64th Legislature.

The Advisory Council shall develop recommendations for improving the structure for hunting and fishing licenses and establishing a sustainable funding mechanism for fish and wildlife management in Montana in the future. Specific tasks include:

- Evaluating options and recommending approaches for improving the structural balance of fish and wildlife management funding and expenditures;
- Proposing changes to hunting and fishing licenses that streamline and simplify the structure and types of fishing and hunting licenses in order to improve service and better meet the needs of license buyers;
- Assessing the impact of free and reduced price hunting and fishing licenses on funding for fish and wildlife management and, if appropriate, recommending modifications to these licenses;
- Evaluating the earmarking of hunting and fishing license funds;
- Proposing prices for hunting and fishing licenses that will result in a sufficient and stable source of revenue and funding for fish and wildlife management;
- Evaluating the appropriate role of fishing and hunting license buyers and other fish and wildlife users in funding fish and wildlife management; and
- Developing a final report to the Director of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks on the advisory council's findings and recommendations.

II. COMPOSITION

The list of names of Advisory Council members is attached.

III. COMPENSATION

Council members shall be reimbursed by the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks for reasonable travel expenses pursuant to sections 2-15-122(5) and 2-18-501 through 2-15-503, MCA

IV. DURATION

The Advisory Council shall complete its work by March 15, 2014.

Fish and Wildlife Licensing and Funding Citizen Advisory Council Member Names and Contact Information July 11, 2013

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License Agent
Still to be confirmed